

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1 to 10 without prejudice and add the following new claims

11 to 25:

Claims 1 to 10.(canceled)

11.(new) A method of making small glass containers, such as glass bottles or glass ampoules, thereby avoiding contamination of an inner surface of a hollow glass body, from which the glass containers are made, by alkali compounds during thermal processing when the hollow glass body is made of an alkali-metal-containing glass, said method comprising the steps of:

a) clamping a hollow glass tube in a vertical orientation, wherein said hollow glass tube has an interior surface, an open upper end, a lower end, and is composed of said alkali-metal-containing glass;

b) heating the lower end of the hollow glass tube; and

c) partially closing the hollow glass tube at the open upper end so that an overpressure is produced during the heating of the lower end while keeping the open upper end sufficiently open so that an excessive overpressure that would otherwise damage the glass tube is not produced;

so that the contamination of the interior surface by the alkali compounds is at least reduced.

12.(new) The method as defined in claim 11, wherein the hollow glass tube is partially closed at the upper end by a stopper with a through-going opening.

13.(new) The method as defined in claim 11, wherein the hollow glass tube is thermally cut to length, thereby forming a bottom at the lower end of the hollow glass tube.

14.(new) The method as defined in claim 13, wherein said bottom formed at the lower end of the glass tube is thermally opened during said heating of the lower end of the hollow glass tube.

15.(new) The method as defined in claim 14, further comprising forming a mouth of said glass container at the lower end of the hollow glass tube.

16.(new) A method of making small glass containers, such as glass bottles or glass ampoules, thereby avoiding contamination of an inner surface of a hollow glass body, from which the glass container is made, by alkali compounds during thermal processing when the hollow glass body is made of an alkali metal-containing glass, said method comprising the steps of:

a) clamping a hollow glass tube in a vertical orientation, wherein said hollow glass tube has an interior surface, an open upper end, a lower end, and is composed of said alkali-metal-containing glass;

b) heating the lower end of the hollow glass tube; and

c) blowing gas into the hollow glass tube through the open upper end of the hollow glass tube so that an overpressure is produced during heating of the lower end;

so that the contamination of the interior surface with the alkali compounds is at least reduced.

17.(new) The method as defined in claim 16, wherein the hollow glass tube is thermally cut to length, thereby forming a bottom at the lower end of the hollow glass tube.

18.(new) The method as defined in claim 17, wherein said bottom formed at the lower end of the glass tube is thermally opened during said heating of the lower end of the hollow glass tube.

19.(new) The method as defined in claim 18, further comprising forming a mouth of said glass container at the lower end of the hollow glass tube.

20.(new) A method of avoiding contamination of an inner surface of a hollow glass body by alkali compounds during thermal processing when the hollow glass body is made of an alkali-metal-containing glass; said method comprising the steps of:

a) clamping a hollow glass tube in a vertical orientation, wherein said hollow glass tube has an interior surface, an open upper end, a lower end, and is composed of said alkali-metal-containing glass;

b) heating the lower end of the hollow glass tube; and

c) producing an overpressure in the hollow glass tube during the heating of the lower end;

so that the contamination of the interior surface with the alkali compounds is at least reduced.

21.(new) The method as defined in claim 20, wherein said overpressure is produced by blowing gas into the hollow glass tube through the open upper end of the hollow glass tube during said heating of the lower end of the hollow glass tube.

22.(new) The method as defined in claim 20, wherein said overpressure is produced by partially closing the hollow glass tube at the open upper end during said heating while keeping the open upper end sufficiently open so that an excessive overpressure that would otherwise damage the glass tube is not produced.

23.(new) The method as defined in claim 22, wherein said open upper end is partially closed with a stopper provided with a through-going opening.

24.(new) The method as defined in claim 21, wherein the hollow glass tube is thermally cut to length, thereby forming a bottom at the lower end of the hollow glass tube.

25.(new) The method as defined in claim 24, wherein said bottom formed at the lower end of the glass tube is thermally opened during said heating of the lower end of the hollow glass tube.